



# BLM NEWS RELEASE

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Bureau of Land Management  
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## Outreach to Mining Claimants about Abandoned Mine Hazards

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced an initiative to reach out to mining claim holders to mitigate abandoned mine hazards. The effort responds to growing concerns about the number of accidents and hazards related to abandoned mines, particularly on the National System of Public Lands. To assist with this effort, the BLM has identified abandoned mine sites, as well as nearby active claims, using computerized land records and maps.

“This initiative continues the bureau’s commitment to reducing abandoned mine hazards,” said BLM Director Bob Abbey. “We’re taking a pro-active approach to warning active mining claimants whose mining claims include hazardous sites.”

The BLM’s Abandoned Mine Lands program is actively engaged in efforts to identify and mitigate mine hazards on public lands through cooperative efforts with claimants where possible, and through direct action where necessary. Under a program created in 2009, the BLM partners with mine claimants, landowners, the mining industry, and recreational user groups to work together to reduce or remediate these hazards. Nearly 4,000 holders of active mining claims, located mostly in the western U.S. and Alaska, will be contacted by the BLM through the mail to advise them if hazards have been reported within or near the boundaries of their claims. Along with this information, claim holders will be advised of their potential responsibilities if certain mining activities are occurring.

Claimants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with federal regulations. If a claimant’s mining activity requires an abandoned mine feature to remain open on the active claim, casual use will have been exceeded as a result, and mining activity on the claim must then be authorized by the BLM. Such authorization is obtained by submitting a notice or plan of operations as outlined in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

If closing the abandoned sites would interfere with an active mining claim, the BLM plans to contact the claimant to resolve the issues as required by federal regulations. Abandoned mine hazards on active mining claims that are not required for current exploration may be candidates for permanent closure. Active mining claim holders have the right to object to the BLM’s proposed closure or mitigation of the abandoned mine hazard, but if they do, they will become responsible for maintaining the mine in a “safe and secure” condition. They must also fully comply with federal surface management regulations and accept financial responsibility for site maintenance, protection of public health and the environment, and final site reclamation.

To support the new outreach effort, the BLM is issuing detailed guidance to its district and field offices on the procedures for identifying and notifying claimants whose mining claims may contain the hazards. This new policy can be reviewed at:

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[http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction\\_Memos\\_and\\_Bulletins/national\\_instruction/2010/I\\_M\\_2010-211.html](http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction_Memos_and_Bulletins/national_instruction/2010/I_M_2010-211.html). Earlier this year, the BLM issued instructions on how the agency will handle mitigation or closure of the abandoned mine hazards ([http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction\\_Memos\\_and\\_Bulletins/national\\_instruction/2010/I\\_M\\_2010-045.html](http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction_Memos_and_Bulletins/national_instruction/2010/I_M_2010-045.html)). In general, the BLM emphasizes that abandoned mine features are potentially hazardous and recommends that mine claimants and members of the public “Stay Out and Stay Alive.” The BLM’s Washington Office has published answers to many questions about abandoned mine hazards and the responsibilities of holders of active mining claims. For more information, visit the BLM website at [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

The BLM manages more land – more than 245 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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